
Book Review

SGML: the user's guide to ISO 8879

Joan M Smith & Robert Stutely

172 pp., £22.50 ISBN 0-7458-0221-4 Ellis Horwood, 1988

Anyone who has attempted to read the SGML Standard (ISO 8879: Standard Generalized Markup Language) will welcome the idea of a guide or companion to assist in comprehending its often tortuous prose. Be warned, the title of this book is misleading; it is not a guide to the standard for the untutored reader. Rather, it is addressed to the knowledgeable reader, providing useful aids to assist such a reader in navigating the text of the standard. For example, the actual standard does not have an index; this guide provides several.

The navigational assistance is provided under five headings. First come tables of all the syntax productions in SGML ordered by numerical sequence and in alphabetic sequence, together with an index of syntax productions. Next is a list of all the abbreviations provided in the standard. This is followed by a listing of all the character entities defined in the standard grouped under several headings—alphabetic characters, general use characters, technical use characters and mathematical symbols—together with indices of character entities ordered by entity reference name and by description. The book is rounded off with a general index to ISO 8879 and a list of the SGML keywords and reserved names.

If you need to find your way around the text of the SGML standard, the information in this book will be invaluable. If, however, you want a book that helps you to understand the standard you should go for Charles Goldfarb's *SGML Companion* (Oxford University Press, 1990).

DAVID BARRON
Southampton, UK
dwb@ecs.soton.ac.uk

